



# Public Health

Seattle & King County

HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

Dorothy F. Teeter, MHA, Interim Director and Health Officer

March 2006

Dear Seattle resident or property owner,

You may have heard that this spring the Washington State Department of Agriculture is planning to apply a bacterial pesticide by helicopter over a 100-acre site in your neighborhood. The purpose is to eradicate a gypsy moth infestation. According to the Department of Agriculture, this site was selected because gypsy moths were trapped there during the past three summers. The pesticide that will be applied is called Foray 48B and contains the active ingredient *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Btk).

Public Health is sending you this letter to answer health questions you may have about the spray.

- Based on available data, Btk is not toxic to people;
- Btk is a naturally occurring bacteria found in the soil;
- It is unlikely you will have any health impacts from the spray, though after exposure to Btk some people have reported skin rash, irritation of the eyes, nose and throat and/or hay-fever-like symptoms. These symptoms may not be related to the Btk exposure. Other causes may be reactions from inert ingredients in the spray, dislodged pollen or airborne particulates.

Public Health suggests the following to minimize contact with the spray:

- Stay inside for 30 minutes after the spray.
- Do not allow children to play outside until moisture has dried.
- If you do come in contact with the spray, wash affected skin with soap and water.

People with certain medical conditions may want to be extra cautious to avoid contact with the spray:

- People with an illness such as leukemia, AIDS or other immune system deficiency, people receiving radiation or chemotherapy treatment, and people with asthma, emphysema or allergic sensitivities should be careful to minimize their exposure to the spray.

If you have additional questions:

- Contact your health care provider if you have specific concerns about exposure to Btk or if you are not sure of your immune status,
- Visit Public Health's website for additional information on gypsy moths and Btk at [www.metrokc.gov/health/env\\_hlth/gypsy.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/env_hlth/gypsy.htm)
- Listen to pre-recorded information at Public Health – Seattle & King County information by calling 206-296-4949, press 2, then press number 3.
- Ask specific questions of Public Health – Seattle & King County by calling 206-205-4394. Call during regular business hours.
- Report illness you think may be associated with spraying to the Washington State Department of Health at 360-236-3360 or toll free at 1-888-586-9427.
- Contact the State Department of Agriculture at 800-443-6684.

Sincerely,

**Ngozi Oleru, PhD**

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Public Health – Seattle & King County

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